

Editorial

Welcome to the TERMIS-EU 2008 Porto Meeting

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IT IS A REAL PLEASURE TO WELCOME you to Porto and to the special issue of *Tissue Engineering: Part A* that contains all the abstracts submitted and accepted for presentation at the 2008 Annual Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine International Society–European Chapter (TERMIS-EU) Meeting.

As you might be aware, it was a tradition for *Tissue Engineering* to publish the abstracts of TESI and then, after merging with ETES, of the TERMIS World Congresses (Shanghai, Pittsburgh) and North American meetings. Last year in London we started doing the same with the TERMIS-EU meetings. This year, once again, Mary Ann Liebert and the editors of *Tissue Engineering* were kind enough to decide to publish the abstracts of the Porto meeting.

The present issue of *Tissue Engineering* compiles the entire range of nearly 750 abstracts accepted for presentation for the 2008 TERMIS-EU Meeting. These abstracts were submitted by researchers from all over the world and from different research groups and core research fields. This number is considered by the organizers as a great achievement, since we have set a goal to make this the largest ever TERMIS-EU meeting. We knew, however, that this was quite a difficult challenge. In fact, not only was the London meeting, as expected, a great success in attracting abstracts, but we knew beforehand that 2008 was the year of the World Biomaterials Congress, to be held in Europe just three weeks before our meeting.

We also set an objective of making sure that we would be able to organize a very international meeting, with many more participants from North America, Asia, and third world countries than was typical in ETES and in TERMIS-EU. We have tried to work for that, using our network of contacts. We are proud to conclude that it was, in fact,

possible to achieve that goal. For instance, the United States is the fourth country, after Portugal, the United Kingdom, and Germany, with more abstracts accepted (9% of the total). Korea is the eighth country represented (with 5% of the total), and China and Japan, as well as Turkey, were also quite active on submissions. This Asian representation is particularly relevant as we are approaching the TERMIS World Congress in Dajaeon, South Korea, next year. Receiving abstracts from all over the world proves that it was feasible to reach the goal of having a multidisciplinary conference, enriched with participants from different cultures.

We also tried to organize the meeting agenda so that the scientific community could build their own program of scientific excellence. We have opened a call for submission of proposals for the organization of 90-minute symposia, typically with one or two organizers, a distinguished keynote speaker (30 minutes), and four general presentations (of 15 minutes each, either invited or selected from the abstracts submitted to that particular symposia). In some cases, the symposia have more than one session and/or are composed of three keynote invited talks of 30 minutes each. These thematic symposia, organized by the world's leading scientists and featuring recognized keynote speakers, constitute 41 of the meeting's sessions. All of the remaining parts of the program are made up of general oral sessions, organized around state-of-the-art scientific topics that are based on the submitted abstracts, as well as a very well attended poster session of around 400 attendees.

In addition, the program of the TERMIS-EU 2008 Meeting includes eight plenary lectures given by some of the very best scientists working in different cutting-edge areas that are relevant to TERMIS. This is one of the highlights of the meeting.

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TERMIS has as its main goal to try to get together specialized international communities in the field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine in a way that enables it to promote education and research in this area through regular meetings, publications, and other forms of communication/announcement. TERMIS-EU is also an international forum for promoting an informed discussion toward the challenges and benefits of the therapeutic application of the technologies developed by tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. Therefore, the Porto program assures a scientific and industrial impact and encourages the participation of a high number of scientists and researchers from both academia and industry. In order to enhance education and outreach aspects, a special session has been organized within the conference program, being hosted by the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative (PTEI). This is specially aimed for high school teachers in order to make them aware of significant aspects of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

The conference will be held in the very hospitable World Heritage city of Porto, Portugal, from June 22 to 26, 2008. Besides a cutting-edge scientific program in the field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine, we added a wonderful social program that will be associated with the typical St. John (S. João), one of the major Porto and Portuguese festivities. The venue, Alfândega (Old Customs House) Congress Centre is located in the very heart of the Porto historical centre on the north bank of the River Douro, overlooking the Port Wine cellars. Porto is a city of wonderful people, and a dream for food and wine lovers. So, make sure you enjoy it as much as possible with your friends and colleagues. I have been enjoying it since I was born (not the wine in the first few years!) 41 years ago, and I could never leave the city to live anywhere else!

Finally, the meeting will also be associated with the great opening of the headquarters of the European Institute of Excellence on Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine (www.3bs.uminho.pt). This state-of-the-art facility with 3600 m² will also be the new home for the 3B's Research Group of the University of Minho and our spin-off company Stematters. It is a unique facility, fully planned from scratch, for research in the field of TERM. This building and its well equipped laboratories will be available for visits during the meeting. These facilities will allow research ranging from synthesis, processing, and modification of new materials to small animal testing, and of course, all biological and stem cell work can be carried out in rather good conditions.

The new institute results from the European Network of Excellence (NoE) on Tissue Engineering—EXPERTISSUES (<http://www.expertissues.org>). The NoE was funded, in a very competitive selection process, by the Sixth Framework program (FP6) of the European Commission (EC), being the only European network of excellence in the field of tissue engineering. The institute, formed as a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG),

will be sustainable in time, with headquarters in Taipas, Minho, Portugal, and branches in more than 20 different locations in 13 countries all over Europe. This is, however, an open process, and other groups of excellence may join this European effort. Rui L. Reis, the coordinator of the NoE, will be the initial CEO of the institute, which has as one of its main aims to collaborate even more with groups of excellence in Asia, North America, the Pacific, and elsewhere.

However, the TERMIS-EU 2008 meeting and its program are mainly made up of the conference delegates who will present their new results and scientific approaches to different problems. All the abstracts of these contributions are published in this issue of *Tissue Engineering*, the official journal of TERMIS.

A word of acknowledgement is owed to TERMIS and its officers for allowing us to organize the meeting and supporting us whenever necessary. We would also like to thank all the institutions, foundations, and companies that have sponsored us and made the meeting possible. You may visit many of them in the exhibition area.

But I am especially grateful to all of my postdoctoral fellows, Ph.D. students, management and informatics team members, and staff colleagues who work daily on the 3B's Research Group—Biomaterials, Biodegradables and Biomimetics, which I have the pleasure of directing. We now include more than 110 people, from around 20 different nationalities, of which only five are staff members. All of the others are quite young, bright, and ambitious fellows and students. The organization of this TERMIS-EU meeting was mainly the result of the hard work, devotion, commitment, ambitions, and aspirations of many of these people. They have put a great number of hours into the enterprise of organizing the conference and realized that this was an important event for all of us. I cannot refer to all the relevant names herein, but when you find one of the members of the 3B's—U. Minho during the meeting, please just speak with her/him and you will see how fortunate I am for being able to advise and direct such a wonderful group of young and bright researchers!

Many people made rather important contributions to the organization, but in this case I really have to give a special word of appreciation to two individuals. They are Ariana Santos, my event organizer within the 3B's, and Catarina Alves, the postdoctoral fellow who has been leading, along with Ariana and myself, all this organization. Without them we would never have been able to organize this meeting and have this special issue out today. They have made this their main daily activity for months. Thank you very much, Ariana and Catarina.

From both a scientific and a social/cultural perspective, we really hope that this will be a meeting to remember. Enjoy the conference, Porto, and if possible, Minho and other areas of Northern Portugal!

Rui L. Reis and the Organizing Team